

WASHINGTON OFFICE:
324 CANNON HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20515
(202) 225-3361
FAX: (202) 225-3462



FLAGSTAFF OFFICE:
405 N. BEAVER ST., SUITE 6
FLAGSTAFF, AZ 86001
(928) 286-5338
FAX: (928) 779-6310

CASA GRANDE OFFICE:
211 N. FLORENCE ST., SUITE 1
CASA GRANDE, AZ 85122
(520) 316-0839
FAX: (520) 316-0842

TOM O'HALLERAN

1ST DISTRICT, ARIZONA

March 19, 2020

Chairwoman Betty McCollum
House Appropriations Committee
Subcommittee on Interior, Environment and Related Agencies
2007 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Ranking Member David Joyce
House Appropriations Committee
Subcommittee on Interior, Environment and Related Agencies
2007 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairwoman McCollum and Ranking Member Joyce:

Thank you for your commitment to the education of Native American students and your tireless efforts to address the learning environment for students who rely on the Bureau of Indian Education (BIE).

Your commitment to funding BIE school construction and to exercising oversight of the Bureau of Indian Affairs' (BIA) School Construction program has been essential to improved outcomes for many students across Indian Country. As you know, BIE has maintenance responsibility over seventy-three of the BIE's 183 schools and dormitories. These schools have either received replacement funding or are eligible for replacement. This backlog creates untenable situations where students are either in trailers or substandard classrooms.

As a result, I ask that you consider increasing funding for this vital program and to direct the Department of the Interior to quickly and efficiently complete construction of the schools listed on the 2004 and 2016 School Construction Priority Lists. This will ensure that hundreds of students have safe learning environments, staff have safe quarters, and learning outcomes improve for students across Indian Country.

I have visited numerous schools in need of replacement, both on the waiting list and some not yet on the list. The conditions I have seen are entirely unacceptable and must be remedied as quickly as possible. I believe that your oversight of the construction program has led to more schools moving forward in the replacement process, and I encourage you to continue conducting oversight so that more schools will be funded in a transparent and open process.

Similarly, I appreciate your willingness to explore innovative methods of promoting improved educational outcomes through your support for sovereignty and self-determination in education, and I urge you to continue to support these efforts. For example, The Hopi Tribe is pursuing a landmark effort to unify its seven Tribally Controlled Schools into a single school district. The

Tribe's effort will create a better learning environment for Hopi children and provide a standardized educational experience throughout Hopi schools. However, the Tribe is in desperate need of construction funding to replace the 100-year-old Hopi Day School and for the construction of a new administrative building to house the Hopi School System.

Additionally, scholarships through the BIE's Scholarships & Adult Education program are important and should be funded at \$36 million. In my district, this program allows the Navajo Nation's Office of Navajo Nation Scholarship & Financial Aid to provide approximately \$5000.00 a year to nearly eight thousand students. I ask that you increase funding for the program, which would make college more attainable for many students.

Education forms the foundation of strong communities, so it must form the foundation of our efforts to improve federal programs in Indian Country. Accordingly, I ask that the committee increase funding for School Construction, increase funding for Replacement Facility Construction, enhance funding for Employee Housing Repair, and increase funding for Facilities Improvement & Repair.

I appreciate your time and attention to this importation matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Tom O'Halleran". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Tom O'Halleran
Member of Congress